

Continental Developments

CONFERENCES

AFRICAN UNION

33rd Summit

The new leadership pledges to champion infrastructure development.

The 33rd African Union (AU) ordinary summit opened on February 9th in the **Ethiopian** capital, Addis Ababa, under the theme “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development.”

In his opening remarks, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat focused on the challenges facing the African continent, ranging from conflicts to threats of terrorism and locust invasion in Ethiopia and **Kenya**.

“The persistence of terrorism threatens the collapse of some member states and must be eradicated. Women and children remain the biggest victims of conflict,” he said.

The chairperson said African countries need to mobilise “our energy to deal with these challenges”.

The outgoing AU chairperson, **Egyptian** President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, presented the achievements and efforts made over the past year in African security, peace and development. He handed over the baton to the new AU chairperson, **South African** President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Ramaphosa said that addressing the challenges of women’s empowerment, gender-based violence, and the conflicts in **Libya** and **South Sudan** will be high on the agenda of AU in 2020. (*FBC 9/2*)

South Africa, as chair of the AU, will also champion infrastructure development as the key to unlocking economic development and industrialisation on the continent.

This, as the continent collectively strives to meet its industrialisation goals and to build the Africa envisaged in the AU Agenda 2063 under the theme “The Africa We Want”.

In a bid to drive infrastructure development, President Ramaphosa says South Africa will play an active role in driving the Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI).

The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that Africa’s infrastructure needs some US\$130bn to US\$170bn a year.

“We need more dams, power plants, fibre optic cables and ports. But we also need more social infrastructure like roads, schools, public housing and clinics.

“As all developing countries, we cannot sate our continent’s infrastructure hunger with our limited resources, and it goes without saying that this presents a major investment opportunity for our respective countries,” said Ramaphosa.

According to the AfDB, the financing gap is between \$68bn and \$108bn.

“This means we must think creatively and expansively about how we can close this gap. We also must be open to various financing models, such as public-private partnerships, commercial loans, development funding, and sovereign bonds,” said Ramaphosa.

Infrastructure development in the continent will also provide fertile ground for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The implementation of this seminal agreement will boost intra-Africa trade, reignite industrialisation, and pave the way for the meaningful integration of Africa into global value chains and the global economy.

This is a milestone in the continental integration project, with Africa destined to become the biggest common market in the world. (*sanews.gov.za 10/2*)

Countries meeting at the summit adopted a unified position on the recovery of illicit assets, a source close to *Trust Africa*, a pan-African independent foundation based in Dakar, **Senegal**, disclosed to *PANA*.

The Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) proposed by **Nigeria** was unanimously adopted by AU heads of state and government.

The development of the policy instrument was spearheaded by the AU champion for anti-corruption, the Nigerian government, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the AU advisory board on corruption with the support of members of the Consortium to Stem Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) from Africa. (*PANA, Banjul 10/2*)

IN BRIEF

Niger River Basin: The African Development Bank (AfDB), the **Malian** government and the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) launched on February 4th the Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Niger Basin (PIDACC).

At a total cost of around CFA francs 122m, including CFAf 13.8m for Mali, PIDACC will contribute to improving the resilience of the people and ecosystems of the Niger River Basin through sustainable resource management, benefiting 130m people in nine countries.

The project will involve the recovery of 140,000 hectares of degraded land; the construction of 209 water infrastructure systems for agro-pastoral and fish farming activities; the implementation of 450 sub-projects for agricultural chain development and 184 youth SMEs; and adaptation capacity building for 1m Malian households. (*afdb.org 6/2*)

OPEC: A committee appointed by the OPEC club of oil-producing countries and its allies to study the effects of coronavirus recommended additional output cuts on February 8th, **Algeria’s** energy minister said.

“The coronavirus epidemic has had a negative impact on economic activity, notably in transport, tourism and industry, particularly in **China**,” Mohamed Arkab, who is also president of the OPEC conference, said in a statement.

Delegates of OPEC and other oil producers including **Russia** – together known as OPEC+ – had been in a “joint technical committee” meeting in Vienna, **Austria** in early February to discuss cutting production, amid fears of the coronavirus situation in oil consumer **China** affecting the market.

OPEC and its allies in December extended an existing agreement to curb crude oil production to prop up prices.

The joint technical committee “recommended extending until the end of 2020 the current production reduction agreement... and proceeding with an additional reduction in production until the end of the second quarter of 2020,” Arkab said.

Arkab added that he supported the conclusions of the committee, which would continue consultations among OPEC+ states to seek mutually agreeable solutions “to quickly stabilise the oil markets and face the current crisis”.

Crude prices have tumbled since the deadly outbreak in the world’s second-biggest economy. The US benchmark oil contract, WTI, fell by around 18% during January to February. (*AFP 8/2 2020*)

COOPERATION AND TRADE

AFRICA – UK

Investment Summit

London seeks to become the continent’s “partner of choice”.

United Kingdom (UK) companies must leap at the chance to deepen economic ties with Africa, a continent with unmatched investment opportunities, British and several African leaders said at a high-level panel.

At an oversubscribed opening ceremony for the 2020 UK-Africa Investment